



Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education

Planning. Guidance. Protection.



DRINKING WATER

Why is drinking water a health issue?

Drinking water comes from a variety of sources including public water systems, private ground water wells, natural springs and bottled water. Clean water is essential to healthy living. Most importantly water is needed for drinking to support a healthy mind and body. Water in a child care facility is also used for cooking, bathing, clothes washing and cleaning.

Healthy drinking water

EPA sets standards that ensure safe drinking water from public water sources. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation's Division of Water Resources oversees drinking water safety. It trains and inspects the operators who clean drinking water for water utilities. Water utilities are required to inspect water for infectious pathogens, chemical contaminants and disinfectant bi-products on a regular basis. By law, you are to be notified if your public drinking water source fails safety testing. For information on how to test your water, contact an approved laboratory. There is a list at (tennessee.gov/assets/entities/environment/attachments/wr_wq_dw_approved-commercial-labs.pdf).

Private drinking water

In rural areas, most people drink water from a private source such as a well or spring. If you get your water from a well or spring, make sure it is safe to drink. Have your water tested for bacteria, viruses and pollutants. If you use a private water source, making sure it is safe to drink is the responsibility of the well owner.

For more information, see our Private Water Supply webpage at (<https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/environmental/private-water-supply.html>)



Reducing Lead in Drinking Water

Lead in drinking water is a real concern. Young children and infants are more vulnerable to lead because the physical and behavioral effects of lead occur at lower exposure levels in children than in adults.

Lead can enter drinking water when pipes that contain lead corrode. When water has high acidity or low mineral content can increase corrosion of pipes and fixtures. The most common problem is with brass or chrome plated brass faucets and fixtures with lead solder, from which significant amounts of lead can enter into the water, especially hot water.

Buildings built before 1986 are more likely to have lead pipes, fixtures and solder.

The more time water has been sitting in your building's pipes, the more lead it may contain. Anytime the water in a particular faucet has not been used for six hours or longer, "flush" water pipes by running the water until it becomes as cold as it will get. This could take as little as five to thirty seconds or up to two minutes or longer depending on whether any water has been run in the building. Your water utility can inform you if longer flushing times are needed to respond to local conditions. A licensed plumber can help to determine if the pipes in your building contain lead.

Only use cold water for eating and drinking: Use only water from the cold water tap for drinking, cooking, and especially for making baby formula. Hot water is likely to contain higher levels of lead. Note that boiling water will **NOT** get rid of lead contamination.

Other things you can do to reduce lead in drinking water include testing water samples from each fixture in the building and avoiding outdoor hoses for drinking water.

For more information about lead in drinking water at childcare facilities, see EPA's webpage *Lead in Drinking Water in Schools and Childcare Facilities*, <https://www.epa.gov/node/116045>.